

#### PLANTS OF NOTE

Superb *Cobaea pringlei* (right) will survive outdoors in sheltered gardens. The leathery leaves of perennial *Bergenia pacumbis* reach 35cm (14in) across (far right). Dazzling blue *Ipomea indica* (below right) is long flowering but needs protection under glass in winter



CHARLIE PRIDHAM



ROY LANCASTER

# ROSELAND HOUSE NURSERY Nursery profile

A nursery in Cornwall specialising in climbing plants for both the garden and under glass made a welcome destination for Roy Lancaster, who discovered much of interest on his visit.  
Photography by Tim Sandall



**ONE OF THE BEST** herbaceous perennials for foliage I grow is a plant I first came to know as *Bergenia ciliata* f. *ligulata* (now *B. pacumbis*). With its glossy, orbicular fleshy leaves reaching 35cm (14in) across, it can be a fine sight; the white or pinkish flowers by contrast are held in unassuming panicles with – or just before – the new leaves, and both can be frost damaged (though rosettes soon regrow).

I first admired it in the *Bergenia* collection assembled for study by the late Dr Peter Yeo at Cambridge University Botanic Garden, in 1961, and later came across it in the wild in mountains above Srinagar, Kashmir. I have it now in a shady border alongside hairy-leaved

*B. ciliata* with which it sometimes grows in the wild.

I was, nevertheless, thrilled on a visit to Cornwall in August last year to see a large, lush mound of it growing in the garden of Roseland House Nursery at Chacewater, northwest of Truro. Charlie Pridham, the nursery owner, who had a career in the merchant navy before retiring here with his wife Elizabeth in 1983, told me that the bergenia enjoys his free draining soil. Charlie usually has plants of it for sale, but several nurseries also list it in the *RHS Plant Finder*.

#### From the beginning

As is sometimes the case with specialist nurseries, Charlie began propagating

plants in his garden to please gardening friends before, encouraged by his success, he spread his wings and propagated in earnest plants for sale. When I visited, I was interested to see other perennials such as a Peruvian *Calceolaria* (similar to *C. pavonii*), an upright woody-based plant, downy and slightly clammy to the touch with large, boldly-toothed, arrow-shaped leaves. It is a plant which needs support and shelter where, in a single summer, it can reach 2m (6½ft) or more and produces large panicles of yellow pouched flowers from the upper leaf axils from September into October. It is not hardy and can be crippled by frost and wilts if short of moisture. This has

## CLEMATIS AT ROSELAND

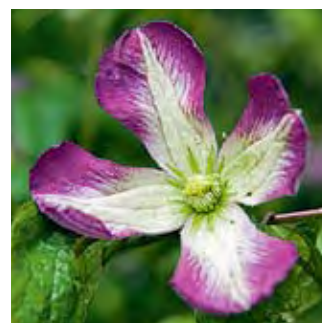
Some interesting *Viticella* Group clematis include:



*Clematis* 'Chacewater' was raised at Roseland House and has white petals edged in mauve. Mildew resistant, it flowers between July and September, and is named after the village the nursery is situated in.



*C.* 'Purpurea Plena Elegans', with its double, blackcurrant-coloured blooms remains one of the most popular and recognisable of all *Viticella* clematis. It makes a fine partner for a pale climbing rose.



*C.* 'Killifreth' was also raised at the nursery and was named after a local tin mine. It is vigorous with blooms from July to September, opening semi-nodding, but becoming saucer-shaped with age.



not stopped me trying it in my garden where it grows well; I am told it is easily increased by late summer cuttings.

Charlie's main interest however, is in climbers – winter hardy as well as those less so. I had already spotted a batch of beautiful *Cobaea pringlei* which I suspect originated from a seed collection made by Martin Rix in Mexico some years ago. This species is named for Dr Cyrus Guernsey Pringle (1838–1911), an American botanist and plant explorer

whose travels and collections in Mexico over many years earned him a tribute from *The Mexican Herald* newspaper as, 'one of the most brilliant and scholarly men ever to grace Mexico with his presence'. Once established, this species is as gloriously rampant as better known *C. scandens*, differing in its more slenderly bell-shaped, pure white blooms. Sadly it is not frost hardy and like the aforementioned *Calceolaria*, it pays to have a plant in reserve to winter under glass. ►

**PLANTSMAN PAIR** Nursery owner Charlie Pridham showing Roy Lancaster the highlights in the garden at Roseland House, Cornwall



**FLORAL PROFUSION** Delicate-looking *Passiflora* 'Star of Surbiton' (above) is a selection of passionflower hardy to -8°C (18°F). Perennial *Calceolaria* (right) is best grown at the foot of a sheltered sunny wall but needs to be kept moist to thrive. It may survive a mild winter, but take cuttings in late summer to overwinter under glass

CHARLIE PRODHAM



Evergreen twiner  
*Lapageria rosea*  
'Flesh Pink'

Other tender climbers include *Pandorea pandorana* and less hardy *P. jasminoides* 'Rosea Superba' with deep pink-throated, trumpet-shaped blooms. Charlie keeps it under glass in winter, but plants have been known to survive -5°C (23°F) outside in some gardens.

A large lean-to conservatory by the house contained many goodies, and the whole of the back wall was covered by *Ipomoea indica*, its large, deep blue flowers almost hurting the eyes, though each one lasts but a day before fading. This plant, Charlie told me, flowers from July through to Christmas.

He sells lots of different passionflowers including *Passiflora* 'Star of Surbiton', a hybrid involving 'Star of Bristol' and *P. 'Purple Haze'*, raised by Myles Irvine (see September 2010, pp610–611) who breeds hardy passionflowers in the shared garden of his flat in Surbiton. Ideal for a sunny wall, this attractive hybrid produces white flowers with a filigree crown of contrasting blue filaments from June to December – it is hardy to -8°C (18°F).

#### Favourite climbers

Beautiful *Lapageria* (Chilean bell flower) are another of Charlie's passions; his National Plant Collection of them is one of his pride and joys. One fine selection with delicate pink blooms, *L. rosea* 'Flesh Pink' was flowering well in the conservatory in a pot filled with what Charlie calls 'forest duff or debris', a mixture that creates the free draining, acidic conditions these plants like. In mild gardens it may succeed in a cool but sheltered position.

First place among his climbers goes to *Clematis*, especially those of the hardy *Viticella* Group which he has growing around the garden, mostly through and over small trees and large shrubs as well as on other supports. They are useful plants for all types of gardens. He is actively breeding his own hybrids, some of which are currently being assessed



Charlie in his polytunnel – old corks serve as eye protectors atop supporting canes

in the *Clematis viticella* trial at RHS Garden Wisley. Cultivar 'Chacewater' is one such and he showed me a plant growing over a low-crowned apple tree. A seedling from 'Tango' raised in 2002 it produces nodding flowers with white tepals flushed violet-pink along the margins, and with a similarly coloured bar on the reverse. Another he pointed out, 'Little Bas', is a seedling of popular 'Minuet' and had been planted to grow through a large example of evergreen *Rhamnus alaternus* 'Argenteovariegata', whose creamy-white variegated foliage provides the perfect setting for the



**'BEAUTIFUL *LAPAGERIA* ARE ANOTHER OF CHARLIE'S PASSIONS AND HIS NATIONAL PLANT COLLECTION OF THEM IS ONE OF HIS PRIDE AND JOYS'**

showers of small, nodding, bowl-shaped violet flowers each with a pale centre.

Roseland House Nursery holds a National Plant Collection of the Viticella Group and along with those performing well, I was particularly pleased to see among the newcomers several fine selections which have stood the test of time such as 'Purpurea Plena Elegans', 'Kermesina', 'Madame Julia Correvon', 'Royal Velours' and 'Étoile Violette'. Some of these I grow and enjoy in my garden. The performance of these clematis in his garden prompted me to ask Charlie about his pruning regime to which he

replied, 'I cut them down to the ground in February'. The results in summer speak for themselves.

Roseland House Nursery offers a mail order service and welcomes visitors to nursery and garden when open. Charlie also attends 25–30 plant fairs, some as far afield as Castle Bromwich and the National Botanic Garden of Wales, so even if you can't make it down to Cornwall, the nursery's tempting plants on offer need not be out of reach. ■

Roy Lancaster VMH is a member of the RHS Woody Plant Committee

**PROTECTED CULTIVATION**  
The Victorian conservatory at Roseland House Nursery (above) is filled with climbers such as scarlet *Mandevilla*

## NURSERYPROFILE



### ROSELAND HOUSE NURSERY

**Address** Chacewater, Truro, Cornwall TR4 8QB  
**Tel** 01872 560451  
**Web** [www.roselandhouse.co.uk](http://www.roselandhouse.co.uk)  
**Email** [clematis@roselandhouse.co.uk](mailto:clematis@roselandhouse.co.uk)

**Opening times in 2011**  
1–6pm, Tues and Weds, 1 April to 22 September. Other times/ days by appointment  
**Plant list:** online only

